

The Environment and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: a Green Economy Approach

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Abstract

Environment and development have a strong causal relationship. They are the essential components of state survival and sustainability. Supported by Green Approach, the environment is capable of sustaining the developmental strides of any state. In recent times the Green Economy approach has become one of the most significant instruments of sustainable development. While questioning the substance of carbon oriented industrialization in achieving sustainable development, Green Economy Approach presents an option kind of practice that enables an understanding of achieving development that does not compromise the needs of the future generation. Using the descriptive-analytic method and relying heavily on secondary data, the research is carried out to interrogate the relationship between the environment and sustainable development. The work adopts the theory of environmentalism as a framework of analysis and found out that, techno-centrism have led to serious environmental degradation as a result of the manipulative tendencies of man, who sees himself as master of the environment. The research recommends among other things the need for states to educate their citizens on the necessity to go green and collaboration with the international community toward green economy as sure ways of achieving sustainable development.

Keywords:

Environment,
Development, Green
Economy,
Industrialization,
Sustainable
Development

Background to the Study

The green movement is one of the most triumphant social movements of our contemporary time. It is the 'master global social movement' (Buttel 2003, p.99). The green movement is able to gain much ground because as Curran (2007) puts it: The green movement not only raised awareness of environmental problems but also placed them firmly on the political agenda. Many environmentalists continue to articulate their concerns as members of a plethora of green civic organizations. Many more are not so connected but demand that their governments respond effectively to accelerating degradation. The past few decades have thus seen an enormous growth of environmental institutions, agencies, green parties, policies and plans across the globe (p.101). Apart from the environmental institutions, there is a need to explore the synthesis of the green movement and exploit the possibility of striking a balance between techno-centrism and eco-centrism to achieve sustainable development. Development is the most talked about issue in Developing countries in the post colonial era. This is so because in comparative terms the Developing World is lagging behind in terms of development. A lot of efforts have been made to find solution to the development status of developing states but these efforts have not yielded fruitful result. Policies like structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) arising from the modernization theory were exported to Developing States as solution to their under development. The Developing World is now looking forward to achieving sustainable development, but this cannot be achieved outside the context of their environment because development cannot be imported to a people but can only be gotten from the content of their environment. But the environment as an issue on the agendas of developing states is not secure, environmental issues in this part of the World are loosely embedded within national policy processes and are easily displaced by issues that assumes greater priority for such states (Burnell and Randall 2008, p.334).

Nigeria is not left out in the aforementioned practice as she has priorities and over depended on the Oil Sector to enhance and sustained her development. Over dependent on oil have not only led to the neglect of the agricultural and other sectors of the Nigerian Economy but have also led to environmental degradation. The impact of industrialization or techno-centrism which can be seen in global warning has made the World to seek for alternative sources of Cleaner energy. It is believed that a move towards Green Economy (GE) will be efforts in the right direction. It is based on this argument that Green Economy has been linked to sustainable development and hopefully when practice by developing State will yield positive result. This approach is capable of inducing diversification, creating employment opportunities and increasing the chances of the poor having access to basic values such as energy, education, water, shelter, communication and transport. In a green economy as UNECA (2012) argues: "Growth in income and employment is driven by public and private investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution enhance energy and resource and prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services" (p.1).

The green economy approach as it relates to sustainable development in Nigeria is a strategy that when adopted will enable Nigeria to create more Wealth from her vast natural resources for the benefit of Nigerians in a more resource-efficient and beneficial

manner. This paper presents what in our opinions is striking new evidence on the interaction between the environment and sustainable development.

Definition of Concepts

Different scholars and agencies proffer different definitions of the concept "environment". It simply means what surrounds us. The environment is the "sum total of all conditions that surround man at any point in time on the earth's surface" (Anijah – Obi 2001, p.3). Akinbode (2002) sees environment to consist of the whole of the places and surrounding in which we live, work and interact with other people in the context of socio-economic, political, religious and cultural activities. This means that the concept of environment is beyond human comprehension. In other to have a broader knowledge of this all encompassing concept, The Federal Environmental Protection Agency Act in Section 38 sees the environment to include water, air, land and all plant and human beings or animals living therein and the interactions that goes on among them (Obabori, Ekpu and Ojealaro 2009, p.1).

The concept Sustainable Development (SD) is a very popular word in recent times because it means that production and consumption of goods and services and the building of houses, schools, factories, dams etc cannot be done without harming the natural environment (Daniels and Daniels 2003). The necessity to protect our natural environment through SD can be seen in the fact that, the environment belongs to each one of us both those that are yet born therefore we need to protect it for the future generation, for if we fail to protect it, our environment will die and belong to the dead and not the living generation. The environment which is a free gift from God is the provider of the essentials of life like air, water and other resources that makes life worth living. SD can be defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs" (The World commission 1987, p.43). By this definition, this concept entails a careful utilization of qualitative improvement that will result into quantitative growth beyond the regenerative capacity of the ecosystem.

To Barke and Conroy (2000) Sustainable Development is "a dynamic process in which communities anticipate and accommodate the needs of current and future generation in ways that produce and balance social, economic and ecological system and link local activities to global concerns" (p.23). Daniels and Daniels (2003) view SD as buildings that will last for many generations and a continuous yield of renewable resources, such as timber and fish etc (p.3). In the same vein Goldstein and Pevehouse (2011) are of the opinion that SD is economic growth that does not deplete resources and destroy ecosystem so quickly that the basis of the economic growth is itself undermined (p.388). According to ECO (2010) the green economy is: a subset of the entire economy. It does not exist in parallel to the entire economy or the 'traditional' economy, but rather it includes similar activities and processes. It produces similar goods and services as the broader, traditional economy, but also includes new green products, services and green processes supporting the production of green products and services (p.44).

The green economy is an economy that marks advanced human well-being and social equity, while extensively reducing environmental risks and ecological insufficiency. Operationally, the green economy is seen as one whose growth in income and employment is driven by an investment that reduces carbon emissions and pollution; Enhance energy and resource efficiency; and prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services (UNEP 2011). The above definitions points to the fact that Green Economy entails promoting growth and development while reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, minimizing waste and inefficient use of natural resources, and strengthening energy security. It demands greening of production and consumption patterns, while reducing poverty and enhancing health and job potentials.

Theoretical Framework

This work is based on the theory of ecologism otherwise known as environmentalism. It is a theory that is prominent in modern world for it demands for fundamental philosophical orientation and mandating diametric political, economic and social change. Some of the proponents of this theory are, John Muir, Rachel Carson, Barry Commoner, Ernest Shumacher, Peter Singer etc.

Ecologism is a strong reaction to anthropocentric view point, which is of the opinion that, human beings are the source of all value, so the value of all things is determine by human condition (Baradat 2008, p.277). In other not to disturb the balance of nature which man is part of, the ecologist argue that human should see themselves as only a part of nature, that is made up of many interactive parts both living and nonliving.

Human activities have over the years wrongly violated nature by attempting to become it master. The view which man has of nature is destructive because humans have seen nature as an economic resource that needed to be manipulated with impunity by man. Baradat (2008) posits that: Human have created an artificial antinational world, one that fouls the air and water every living creature depends. We have accelerated the annual rate of species extinction 200-fold over the preindustrial rate: the great rain forests that do so much to regulate the climate and oxygenate the air are disappearing under the treads of giant earth movers; global warming due to the green house effect caused by gases released into the atmosphere has begun the dangerous melting of glaciers and the polar icecaps; and the ozone layer depletion because of industrial pollution threatens us with lethal solar radiation (p.278).

These activities of man are capable of depriving Sustainable Development. The above human activities that have tempered with nature are geared towards developmental efforts of man, because of his grave for improved naturalism. The theoretical orientation of green politics is divided into strands; we have the deep ecologists and the shallow or humanist ecologists. The deep ecologists view nature as the source of moral goodness. In their extremism, they reject the anthropocentric approach for the bio-centric view, they believe that all things in the universe have value in and of themselves and that the value human being may place on other objects is irrelevant. They further argue that being is the common denomination among all things; therefore all things deserve some measure of

respect (Baradat 2008, p.280).

The position of the deep ecologist when followed will lead to sustainable development because if the principle, that all organisms and entities in the environments are equal moral worth, each is an expression of the goodness of nature is followed, if man threatens nature, they also reduce their own validity and worth. This strand of ecologism calls all people to abandon their anthropocentric view of the world and embrace the totality instead. This is one sure way of solving the problem of preserving the biodiversity which is becoming acute in the face of the rapidity of human population growth and intensification of world economic activities (Baxter 1999, p.2).

Shallow or humanistic ecologists aver that the gradual reduction of pollution, materialism and population growth is essential for the well-being of the human condition. It is on the above position that they foresaw the impossibility of sustainability. Hence the call by humanistic ecologists for the immediate conservation to the use of renewable resources (Solar and hydrogen energy) is imperative.

The Link between Environment and Sustainable Development

There seems to be an uneasy relationship between environment and development, talk less of sustainable development. In the real sense the activities of man on the environment can be seen in two positions; when carried out with reckless impunity can hamper development, but when carefully carried out, they are capable of not only spurring development but also sustaining such development. Issues like ozone depletion, desertification, soil erosion, water pollution etc are caused by man's quest for development. The aforementioned are on the increase in recent times because of increased technological development which is the instrument for tapping the natural resources that are of high economic significance to man.

The environmental quality and its sustainability are fundamental for overall development in the Niger-Delta region. This argument stems from the fact that more than 60 per cent of the people in the region depend on the natural environment for their livelihood (UNDP, 2006). As a result of global environmental change, the livelihood activities of the people are now dislocated as the effects on farmlands, economic crops, creeks, lakes and rivers became so severe and devastating. Environmental quality affects and can be affected by economic development. Environmental degradation can occur from the pace of economic development. This may be as a result of the pressure that the growing population is bound to have on the fixed land and other resources that the land holds. This can be seen in the fact that: the growing consumption needs of people in developing countries... there is increasing concern that the destruction of the world's remaining forests, which are concentrated in a number of highly indebted developing countries in Africa... will greatly contribute to climate change caused by global warming through the green house effect. (Todora and Smith 2011, P.466)

This situation is quite worrisome and calls for the need to pay proper attention to the environment because the future growth and overall quality of life of the teeming Nigerian population critically need quality environment. The unsustainable utilization of the resources base of Nigeria is compromising the development need of the future generation. The indiscriminate destruction of these resources in pursuit of present development is a sin against the future generation.

Economic security and human safety are basically reliant on environmental goods and services. This is why every person on earth depends upon the aptitude of nourishing ecosystems to sustain basic values such as food, fibre and freshwater, climate regulation, nutrient recycling, and waste absorption. This scenario is common in Third World States where Farmers, fishermen and many other poor category of people dependent on the environment for their source of revenue and income.

The poor are the worst hit victims of environmental degradation because they live on degraded areas of the environment where they can afford. The implication of this is that, they will find it difficult to get out of poverty as the areas they live in are polluted and less productive. With this, the children who are born in such areas have no bright future as they are bound to inherit a future that has been already compromised. This case can be clearly seen in some areas of the Niger-Delta region in Nigeria, whereby the people have been deprived of their local means of livelihood as a result of environmental degradation arising from the activities of the oil multinational companies.

The activities of man on the environment can also affect rural development and the development of a state at large. Land in many rural areas of Nigeria is being unsustainably over exploited by the existing populations, thereby making it almost impossible to meet the expanded food need of the growing population of Nigeria to meet the target of food need. Todaro and Smith (2011) conceive that: we require radical changes in the distribution, use and quality of resources available to the agricultural sector. And because women are frequently the caretakers of rural resources such as forests and water supplies and provide much of the agricultural supply of labour, it is of primary importance that environment programs be designed around their role (p.470). Development can be sustained when it is holistic and does not compromise the development potentials of the future.

Green Economy as a panacea for Sustainable Development

The hazards that accompanies the old way of energy generation and ways of carrying out economic activities based on fossil fuels, have made concerned individuals to start thinking about restructuring their current economic model to conform with sustainable environmental activities. By this it means that our current economic practices build on the exploitation of finite resources and emission-intensive energy, are no longer sustainable.

Based on the above expression it will be right for states, particularly Nigeria to key in on the principles of a Green Economy and Sustainable development as envisioned by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). Green Economy is an important

tool for sustainable development. Section III of the Rio Declaration stressed several important features which show that Green Economy is a central driver of sustainability. Although Nigeria, Africa's biggest economy on the west coast, is recognized as a country that has the potentials to actively engage with the concept of a Green Economy but unfortunately these potentials are not fully tapped as Nigeria remain tied to her dirty oil industry. Nigeria is Africa's largest oil-producing country and the damage that big oil companies have done to sensitive environmental areas like the Niger Delta region cannot be overemphasized.

The green economy which our forest is a part of can bring about sustainable development when properly conserved by man who is expected not to act as master of the environment but a co-habitant. It is in line with this argument that Gane (2007) avers that: Forest ecosystems are not being adequately safeguarded or sustainably managed to continue to provide the wide range of environmental benefits that society expects. Public concern is mainly concentrated on the effects of forest destruction on life support systems, climate change, and loss of biodiversity, water supplies and landscape. The fears are mainly for the services and intangible benefits that forests provide, rather than the timber supplies or other material goods derived from them. Timber production is frequently portrayed as inimical to conservation even though the world would find it difficult to live without forest products (p.8). In Nigeria and other developing countries, the protection of natural resources in the main is suffering from policy failure national and local level. Wildlife conservation has not, so far, prevented species becoming endangered or extinct at human hands and conservation of the marine environment has not stopped overfishing or dumping.

More so, unguided industrial and construction activities do impact on our environment. These environmental impact stems from the highly energy and CO₂-intensive production of construction materials such as cement. Whenever man feels he is absolutely in charge of the environment, his construction activities can lead to a disruption of the topography due to land clinching, urban sprawl and negative impacts on ecosystems. Conventional monoculture productions also do put pressure on the environment in the form of soil degradation and ground and surface water pollution due to the use of pesticides and fertilizers. Furthermore, clearing primary forests to expand agricultural areas as it is commonly practiced in Nigeria and the aforementioned are some major pressures that have negative effects on our environment. These factors if not properly checked are capable of preventing greening of our environment thereby preventing us from achieving a kind of sustainable development that is associated with green economy.

The green potentials of Nigeria are capable of supporting the current developmental stride and serving as alternative means of sustainable development. This can be seen in the assertion of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2006) document, as presented by UNDP (2012) thus: Nigeria possesses more than 5,000 recorded species of plants, 22,090 species of animals, including insects and 889 species of birds, and 1,489 species of micro-organisms. It is estimated that 0.4% of the plant species are threatened

and 8.5 % endangered, with 0.14 of the animals and insects threatened and 0.22% endangered. By 1992, the country study listed 135 reptile species, 109 amphibian species and 648 fish species and the forests along the south-eastern border with Cameroon area known to be a hotspot for amphibian biodiversity (p.49). From the above analysis it is evident that, despite the great potentials of Nigeria in terms of green economy the potentials are threatened. For Nigeria to achieve and sustain her development through green economy there is need to guide and protect the environment.

At this point, if one asks the question; why do we need Green Economy approach to sustain Nigeria's development? The answers will not be farfetched. Nigeria need to go green because it may appear that Nigeria is very rich in terms of resources but the reality is that the resources are limited, because the vast population and corruption has made it almost impossible to balance supply and demand. More so, as Zimmermann (1951) puts it: "Resources are not, they become" (p.15). It then means that if the green economy path is not quickly taken those things that are potential resources will be destroyed by man before they become. De Gregori (2003) agrees that in the process of resources becoming, they are neither fixed nor finite. It is on this note that, Green economy is perceived to be considerably reducing environmental risks and ecological insufficiency (p.248)

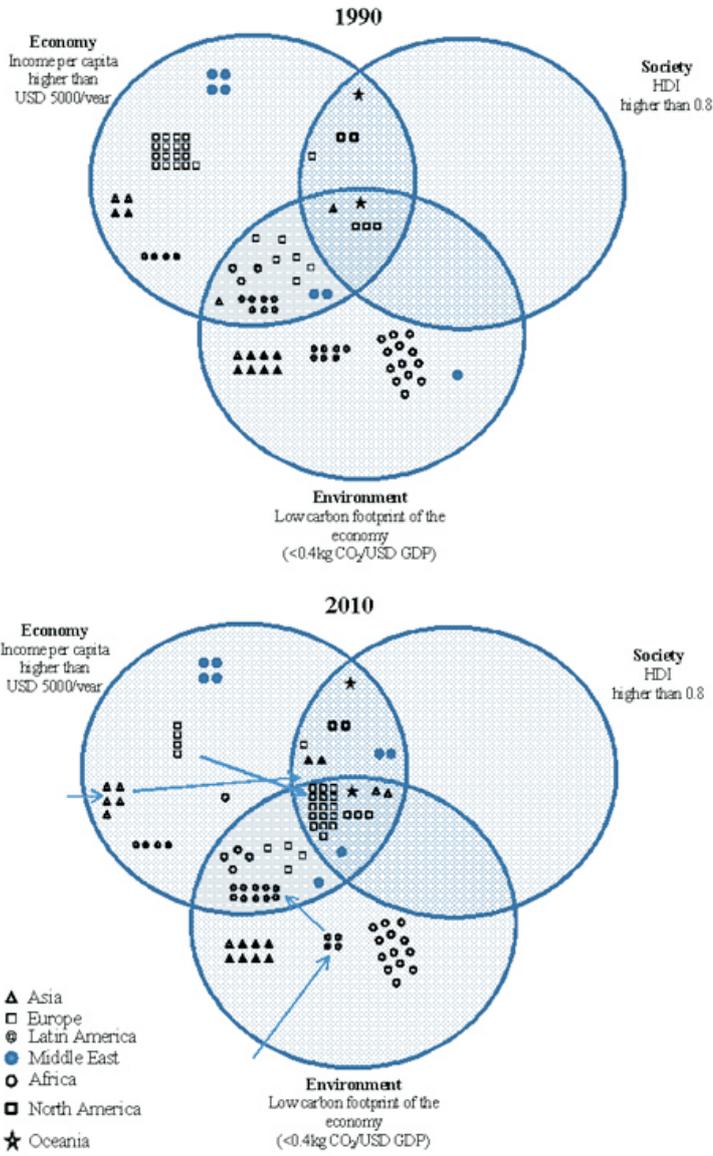
A green economy is at low level carbon, resource efficient, and socially broad. Another advantage of green economy is not just its sustenance of the environment but also its ability to accelerate sustainable development. "In a green economy, growth in income and employment should be driven by public and private investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution, enhance energy and resource efficiency, and prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services" (Voumik and Shah 2014, p.120).

Nigeria's industrial activities are contributing to the world's carbon dioxide emission; if not control through green approach melting down of the poles will also continue at alarming rate. The repercussion is the possibility of our coastal areas going under water. This threat is already here with us in Nigeria, as can be seen in the paste of the occurrences of natural calamity like floods that have significantly swamped our lands, property and homes. More so, some human actions like deforestation and natural deserters like droughts are fast encouraging desert encroachment. These and many others are hampering our people's growth, economy development and sustainability. green economy approach to sustainable development is important because it will help in protecting and saving our economy and environment. There is every need to nip the present threat situation in the bud or else, climate change will affect our agricultural production and further compound the already existing threat to our food security. Given the green potentials of Nigeria it is possible to achieve sustainable development through green economy, because elsewhere Substantial progress on sustainable development has been attained during the last decades through green economy.

Figure 1 Below shows an overlap of three sets of countries which fulfil different criteria which could be credited to a green economy, that is to say a per-capita income higher than 5000 US\$ /year, Human Development Index (HDI) higher than 0.8 (e.g. developed

country) and a low carbon footprint associated to their economies (e.g. less than 0.4kg of carbon per dollar of GDP) (UNCTAD 2011, p.4). Figure 1 shows that from 1990 to 2010, many countries accomplished higher income levels, particularly in Asia and Latin America. The regions that were already developed, such as Europe, saw their economies become less-carbon intensive and move into the central area overlapping the three dimensions of the chart. Many African countries, however, lagged behind. Most African states experienced less carbon emission because of lack of much industrial activities.

Figure 1: Possibilities of Green Economy



Source: Based on work from Doka Life Cycle Assessments and iNodes AG adopted from UNCTAD

Deducing from figure 1 above one will be right to argue that 'green' is not just about environment. It is also about social responsibility. A green economy also enhances just trade through impartial trade production chains which guarantee that small developing countries producers receive fairer terms of trade and better prices. For sustainable development to be achieved through Green Economy both developed and developing states should embrace the race towards green economy.

Ways to go Green and Keep Green in Nigeria

There are many ways to go green and sustain Nigeria's development. The first step has to start with Nigerians (individual). If the citizens of a state are well-informed about the necessity to go green and are convinced the first step is properly taken care of. The reasons given above why green economy is desirable in Nigeria are efforts in the right direction. Such education will help the citizen curtail those practices that are anti-green. The second step is for the government to boldly take a step in the green direction. This can take the form of decision and policy. One good example in Nigeria is the activities of gas flaring carried out by multinational oil companies. It is the responsibility of the Nigerian Government to pass a legislation prohibiting such practices.

The above ways are all domestic steps towards green economy. Another step towards going green and sustaining it, is through collaboration with the international community. The developed countries can support developing countries in their efforts to create a domestic green economy and cope with the impacts of global green economic pursuit. This support can be useful in terms of financial, technical and managerial Capacity. Cosby (n.d) is of the opinion that the areas where international support could be critically essential, are: Help exporters meet stringent international environmental and social standards, both private and public. This means, among other things, information brokering to the private sector, building technical capacity nationally or regionally for accredited testing and certification, and creating/maintaining a strong domestic standards regime. Set nationally appropriate and ambitious targets for clean energy provision, accompanied by incentives such as feed-in tariffs or quotas, and by removal of obstacles such as subsidies for polluting energy sources and technologies. Engage in "smart" industrial policy geared toward the green economy of the future, aimed at diversifying the economy and protecting it from the shocks of the coming global structural changes...

Further than supporting developing countries particularly Nigeria in going green and overcoming the challenges associated with green economy, there is need for states like Nigeria to go into international cooperation or treaties with other international legal personalities who are also on the same page in terms of green economy. To achieve the desired result, such treaties once signed should also be ratified by the parties involved. For instance, agreement at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and United Nations (UN) on reduction or elimination of tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade in environmental goods and services, and agreement on a concerted effort to "oil the innovation chain" – to get new technologies more quickly to market, can help and sustain the drive towards green economy. Alliance towards Green Economy at the international

level can help to build a convincing vision and open up just and sustainable channels for achieving real prosperity in terms of sustainable development.

Conclusion

This article examined the relationship between the environment and sustainable development. Moving in the green economy direction has the capability of achieving sustainable development in Nigeria and other Third World Countries. This notion is bore out of the fact that, the past and present activities of man as he strive to make life worth living are developmental oriented but are not sustainable because of their impact on the environment. Investment in green will also enhance new sectors and technologies that will bring about sustainable economic development and growth of the future: renewable energy technologies, resource and energy efficient buildings and equipment, low-carbon public transport systems, infrastructure for fuel efficient and clean energy vehicles, and waste management and recycling facilities.

One of the major results of this research is that a green economy supports economic growth, creates jobs for the citizens and increases the income base of the individuals. This report also ascertained that Nigeria as state is blessed with the potentials of sustaining her development through the green economy approach. Unfortunately these numerous potentials are under serious threat from the industrial activities of man and natural disasters. To avert this threat there is need for Nigeria and Third World States to embraces the green economy initiative which is capable of substituting cleaner energy and low carbon technologies for fossil fuels, addressing climate change but also creating decent jobs and reducing import dependencies.

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